

Race, Education, and Society in the Urban South

HIST 421 • Spring 2020

Instructor

Alexander X. Byrd (he/him/his)
E-mail: <axb@rice.edu>
Office: Humanities 323
Office Phone: (713) 348-2541
Physical Office Hours: Fri. 2:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. and by appointment.
Office Hours via Canvas: M-S, 9:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Meetings

Except for university holidays and other occasions either noted on the syllabus or announced in class, the course meets Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:29 p.m.



Norman Rockwell, *The Problem We All Live With* (1964).
What was the "problem" to which Rockwell's painting alluded? Is it a problem we all still live with? And who is we?

Course Description & Objectives

This seminar focuses on issues relating to race, education, and society in the urban south, particularly since the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board*. The class is organized around six broad themes focusing on questions and issues related to 1) African American education before the *Brown* ruling, 2) the *Brown* cases themselves, 3) exigencies of postwar American urban life and their consequences for public school education, 4) the process and impact of court-ordered school desegregation, and 5) the regimes characterizing society and school reform in the urbanized American south since the demise of *Brown*-style, court-enforced desegregation.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to 1) demonstrate a firm understanding of the origins of African American public school education in the post civil war United States and the concomitant origins of school desegregation, 2) relate and critique what black and white contemporaries saw as the desirable aspects of segregation, and present as well the social origins of rising twentieth-century discontent with the same, 3) rehearse the road to *Brown* and speak to its most important waypoints, 4) apprehend how the changing nature of the post war American city structured the possibilities of desegregation, and 5) critique the traditions of public schooling and school reform that have come to the fore since the demise of integration as a civic ideal.

As a history seminar, the course is also explicitly concerned with helping participants to exercise key practices of the historical profession, especially those related to argumentation and research. Consequently throughout the semester we will use our subject matter as a base for critiquing, exploring, and mastering selected conventions, assumptions, and/or traditions of the profession. Seminar participants will do ample work with primary source material, vigorously practice their writing skills, and contribute to the creation of a civil but relentlessly probing community of discussion and inquiry.

Assessment & Assignments

Final course grades will be determined as follows: 40% depends on timely completion of and performance on a series of short papers; 20% depends on overall contribution to seminar

discussion and performance on two in-class preparations; 40% depends on timely completion of and performance on a seminar research project and its attendant parts.

Members of the seminar will write five short papers of 1,500–2,000 words relating to the week's reading. The entire seminar is required to submit review of *Hope Against Hope* and *Privilege*. Subsequently, you may choose the additional meeting dates on which you will turn in a short paper. These essays should briefly summarize the scope and content of the week's reading, while attending in greater detail to a point in the assignment about which you are especially concerned.

The following policy applies to the short essays: Work submitted up to two days late will be accepted, but will be graded without comment. Work submitted more than two days late will be accepted, but with the additional penalty of being given a failing grade of 50%.

The late policy described above does not apply to any extra credit work, nor does it apply to class presentations, nor does it apply to the final project (nor to its related parts). Extra credit work submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. The final project, to reiterate, must be submitted by the deadline.

Students may submit up to two review essays beyond the five required (and may choose to have the grade on any of these additional essays replace the grade earned on an already submitted required paper).

Members of the seminar are required to lead at least one discussion over the course of the semester. This obligation consists of preparing an oral presentation during which the presenter will frame the day's discussion by 1) laying out the themes explicit in the week's reading, and by 2) enumerating questions and problems for discussion emergent in the author's treatment of those themes, and 3) relating the first two requirements to the major themes and objectives of the course.

Now for some logistics. This kind of conversation will look something like this: Initially, the discussant will direct questions and comments to the member of the seminar appointed to serve as the day's respondent. The respondent (again, in the initial part of the evening's discussion) will have first go at each question raised by the discussant before yielding to the seminar as a whole. The respondent's responsibility is to address the questions raised by the discussant and to address them in such a way as to help facilitate subsequent conversation. Together, the discussant's questions and the respondents replies will synergistically propel the seminar forward (energizing and drawing the rest of the class into conversation). Over the course of the semester, each member of the seminar will serve as a discussant and as a respondent.

The seminar project consists of creating a documentary research project of twenty pages explicating and analyzing how an issue or major question pertinent to the seminar has played out from the perspective of an educator or educational institution in the Houston area. Further details on the scope and requirements of the research project are forthcoming (and will be posted on Canvas).

One last word on assignments: Students who do not complete and submit all of the



Rusk Settlement House and School. Houston, Texas. Early twentieth century. Is there a problem [being solved here](#)? Are there problems [being promulgated too](#)?

course assignments will receive a failing grade in the course.

Books & Readings

The following books form the course's core reading:

- | | |
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Attendance & Communication

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Assignment details and returned work will be uploaded to Canvas. So it is important for you to check that site frequently. Brief communications concerning the course (reminders, change of venue, et cetera) will be sent via Canvas.

Additional Critical Information

Disability Resource Center

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Rice University Honor Code

I expect that members of the course will re-familiarize themselves with the responsibilities and privileges of the [university's honor system](#). I expect that members of the course will assiduously

follow the dictates of the honor system. I expect that members of the course will raise with me any questions concerning how the system applies to their work in the class. The pledge is required on *all* written work submitted in the course.

Wellness

Take care of yourself. As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Mental health services are available on campus, and treatment does work: <<https://wellbeing.rice.edu/counseling-center/group/contact-us>>.

Calendar

Jan. 15	Course Introduction: Our Problem
Jan. 22	A Way Forward? Carr, <i>Hope Against Hope</i> (2014) Discussant: Dr. Byrd Respondent: The Class
Jan. 29	Khan, <i>Privilege</i> (2012)
Feb. 5	A Backward Glance Fairclough, <i>A Class of their Own</i> , prologue–ch. 7. Discussant: ##### Respondent: #####
Feb. 19	Brown Itself Cottrol, et. al., <i>Brown v. Board</i> (2003) Discussant: ##### Respondent: ##### Fairclough, <i>A Class of their Own</i> , chs. 8–10 Discussant: ##### Respondent: #####
Feb. 26	Urban Contexts: Race and Society in Two Postwar Cities Connolly, <i>A World More Concrete</i> (2014) Discussant: ##### Respondent: #####
Mar. 4	Straus, <i>Death of a Suburban Dream</i> (2014) Discussant: ##### Respondent: ##### <i>200 Words (due on Canvas) and Two Minutes on Project Prospects</i>
Mar. 11	Brown Era Houston and Brown in Houston Ponton, “Criminalizing Space” (2017) Discussant: ##### Respondent: #####
Mar. 25	Breeden, “Educational Politics” (2017) Discussant: ##### Respondent: #####
Apr. 1	Beyond Brown Garcia, <i>Strategies of Segregation</i> (2018)

Discussant: ##### | Respondent: #####

Project First Paragraph Due In Class and on Canvas

Apr. 8

Grundy, Pamela, *Color and Character* (2017)

Discussant: ##### | Respondent: #####

Apr. 15

Payne, *So Much Reform, So Little Change* (2008)

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Apr. 22

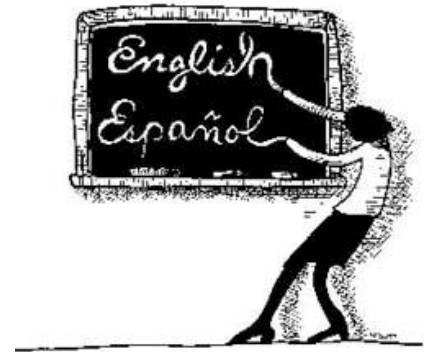
Rooks, *Cutting School* (2018)

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May. 6

Seminar Project due at 5:00 pm May 6 via Canvas

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Staff at the School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens. Washington, DC. February 2018. A school where black lives mattered? What would [that school look like?](#)

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Assessment & Assignments

Final course grades will be determined as follows: 30% depends on timely completion of and performance on a series of short papers; 20% depends on overall contribution to seminar

discussion and performance on two in-class preparations; 30% depends on timely completion of and performance on a seminar research project (and its attendant parts); and 20% depends on the creation of an annotated companion bibliography of 10-20 items further exploring issues raised in at least three of the semester's readings.

Members of the seminar will write seven short papers of 1,500–2,000 words relating to the week's reading. The entire seminar is required to submit review of *Hope Against Hope* and *Privilege*. Subsequently, you may choose the additional meeting dates on which you will turn in a short paper. These essays should briefly summarize the scope and content of the week's reading, while attending in greater detail to a point in the assignment about which you are especially concerned.

The following policy applies to the short essays to some other written work in the seminar: Work submitted up to two days late will be accepted, but will be graded without comment. Work submitted more than two days late will be accepted, but with the additional penalty of being given a failing grade of 50%.

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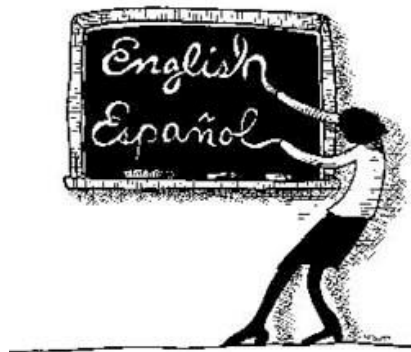
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